Public Draft

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region One
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Ref:DV192-03
November 3, 2003

TO: Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Planning, Prevention & Assistance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Permitting Compliance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Director's Office – Reg Peterson, Parks Division – Walt Timmerman & Allan Kuser, Legal Unit – Brandi Fisher, Design & Construction – Paul Valle, Federal Aid – Bobbi Keeler
Montana Historical Society, SHPO, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's Memorial Building, Helena, 59620-1201
Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation, PO Box 728, Libby, 59923
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103
Joe Gutkoski, President, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th Ave., Bozeman, 59715
Rep. Sylvia Bookout-Reinicke, PO Box 327, Alberton, 59820
Rep. Paul Clark, 20 Fox Lane, Trout Creek, 59874
Sen. Jim Elliott, 100 Trout Creek Road, Trout Creek, 59874
Thompson Falls Library, 402 Maiden Lane, Thompson Falls, 59873
Sanders County Commissioners, PO Box 519, Thompson Falls, 59873

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Region One, has written an environmental assessment (EA) for Flat Iron Ridge fishing access site for the purpose of increased parking, greater opportunity for shore fishing, ADA access, and spreading use over the limited area available to avoid congestion in the boat ramp area.

Questions and comments will be accepted until December 3, 2003. Please direct your questions or comments to Regional Parks Manager Marty Watkins, FWP, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901, or e-mail mawatkins@state.mt.us.

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Vincent
Regional Supervisor

/nli
Enclosure

Public Draft

FLAT IRON RIDGE UPGRADE

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action:

Flat Iron Ridge Fishing Access is one of the most heavily used recreation sites in the Thompson Falls area. It provides ready access to Noxon Rapids Reservoir, close to the town of Thompson Falls, with annual visitation in 2002 of 14,365. Noxon Rapids Reservoir provides opportunities to catch large and small mouth bass, brown trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, lake whitefish, mountain whitefish, northern pikeminnow, peamouth, pumpkinseed, and yellow perch. Noxon Rapids Reservoir had 17,575 angler days in 2001, as well as other boating activities. At Flat Iron Ridge shore fishing is available for small mouth bass, and the area is frequently used, with good catch rates. It is routine in the summer months for Flat Iron Ridge to be full, with overflow boats and trailers parking across Highway 200.

This site was upgraded in 1993 with parking, an improved boat ramp, some riprap, and upgrades to the spit adjacent to the boat ramp to provide for handicapped-accessible fishing and to improve water circulation in the boat ramp area. In addition a new accessible vault toilet was installed to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. At that time a concrete pad was installed down river to act as a picnic site and a fishing platform. Due to limited funding, the site was not constructed properly to provide fishing access, being too high off the water and too far back from the river. It does get frequent use for picnicking, which relieves some of the crowding in the boat launch area. In 1999 a floating dock was added next to the spit to enhance access for the disabled.

As part of the Avista relicensing process for Noxon Rapids and Cabinet Gorge Dam, recreational facilities were inventoried and recommendations made to improve or increase access. This project was recommended, and will be funded, as part of the mitigation for the relicensing of these dams, to provide more opportunity for shore fishing, provide additional boat and trailer parking, to spread the current use over the site to avoid congestion in the boat ramp area, to mitigate for shoreline erosion currently occurring on site, and provide future trail opportunities.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:

Montana Annotated Code 23-1-101

3. Name of Project:

Flat Iron Ridge FAS Upgrade

4. Name, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency):

5. If Applicable:

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Spring 2004
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2007
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 75%

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range, and township):

Sanders County, Section 35, T22N, R30W

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acre		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	
residential			
industrial		(e) Productive:	
		irrigated cropland ..	
(b) Open	20	dry cropland	
		forestry	
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas ...		rangeland	
		other	

8. Map/Site Plan: Attach an original 8½" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

See Appendix A

9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project, Including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action:

The proposed action is to upgrade the facilities at Flat Iron Ridge Fishing Access Site to increase parking, provide greater opportunity for shore fishing, provide ADA access, and spread use over the limited area available to avoid congestion in the boat ramp area. In doing this, other goals considered were:

1. Consideration of the daily and seasonal fluctuation of the river.
2. The possibility of damage to facilities located in the river from debris during flooding.
3. The need to minimize maintenance and seasonal adjustments to docks or floats.
4. The need to spread use over a wider area to avoid congestion.
5. The need to maximize boat and trailer parking given the configuration of the land.
6. The need for a staging area so people can load/unload supplies into the boats and not block the boat ramp.

Because of these considerations the proposal is as follows:

The area west of the boat launch:

1. The current concrete picnic pad will be maintained, and the wood railing replaced.
2. A handicapped accessible fishing platform that will cantilever out over the river will be constructed.
3. An ADA accessible concrete access ramp to the picnic table, and fishing pier will be constructed, and an ADA accessible parking area created.
4. The shoreline in this area will be stabilized with riprap or some other appropriate method, and erosion control vegetation will be planted.
5. Additional parking spaces for single vehicles will be developed across the access road from the picnic table.

The boat launch area:

1. Two parking spaces will be extended to allow boat trailer parking, and one new parking space will be added.
2. The riprap shore protection in this area will be extended to the east to protect current facilities.
3. On the spit next to the boat ramp, the existing wood rail will be replaced.

Between the launch area and the picnic table:

1. Along the shoreline between the boat ramp and the fishing platform, a walkway will be constructed on top of helical piers driven into the bank. The piers would be spaced along the shoreline. To avoid ice damage, the piers will be driven into the bank at a high enough elevation to be out of the water during the winter. Bumpers, running from pier to pier, will be installed along the front of the piers to allow boats to tie up for loading and unloading supplies. The bumpers will also allow debris moving down river during flood situations to hit the bumpers and continue down river rather than hang up on the piers, causing either damage to the piers or erosion to the bank as water moves around the obstruction. The pier design will allow pedestrians access to the walkway along the riverbank between the boat ramp, and the picnic table and fishing platform to the west. This section could eventually become part of the trail system being developed in this area and will be available for fishing from shore.

    a. This portion of the project will be phased in over time. A section will be built in the first two years, and then a determination can be made the following year if the structure is strong enough and suitable for the use intended. Since the technology for this is relatively new, and because of the cost of this item, a phased-in approach is deemed to be the best solution.

2. Parallel parking for boats and trailers will be developed on the right side of the access road to allow for additional vehicle and trailer access. With boats being able to tie along the pier system, these parking areas will be readily accessible for loading and unloading supplies into boats after they have been launched, thus freeing up the launch area.

Because of the scope and cost of the project, the project will be phased in over five years as funding allows. Riprap, construction of additional parking, repair of the existing concrete picnic pad, and the addition of an ADA-accessible fishing platform will occur with this phase. The Helical Piers and boardwalk will be installed as funding allows.

10. Listing of Any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency That Has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

(a) Permits:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Avista Corp.	$120,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
State of Montana	Stream Protection Act 124 Permit

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the proposed action, including secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical and human environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
➢a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			x		Y	1a
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		x				
➢c. Destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		x				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition, or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream, or the bed or shore of a lake?			x		Y	1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		x				
f. Other (list)						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a and d: The installation of the riprap on a portion of the shoreline will reduce erosion into the Clark Fork River that is currently occurring at site. Because of the installation of the helical piers, some changes in erosion patterns will occur. This can be mitigated with riprap above and below the pier section, or in other areas along this section of shoreline as needed. While this action will have more impact on the shoreline than a single dock construction would have, it is necessary due to topography and river flows. Ice during winter and spring flooding at this site would damage any dock structure in the water, and would cause more erosion as flows washed around the supports for the dock structure. Engineers will be consulted to minimize the impacts of this project on river flow.

☼ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
➢a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13c.)		x				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			x			2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		x				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		x				
♦e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		x				
f. Other						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2b: During construction some objectionable orders will be released by equipment working on the site. This impact will be temporary and minor.

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➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
➢a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?			x		Y	3a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			x		Y	3b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?			x		Y	3c
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		x				
e. Exposure of people or property to water-related hazards such as flooding?		x				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		x				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		x				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		x				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		x				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		x				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
♦♦l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)						
♦m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)						
n. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a: During construction some turbidity may be introduced into the Clark Fork River. Care will be taken to use proper silt fencing and other barriers to erosion into the water.

3b: With changes in the shoreline, drainage patterns from the parking area will change. Engineering will ensure that proper drainage is available, with water going through French drains or some other system to avoid turbidity in the river.

3c: Current flow pattern in the Clark Fork River at this location sweeps around a curve, hitting the shoreline at Flat Iron Ridge, and proceeding downriver. Because of this flow pattern, erosion is currently

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♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

ongoing. This project will reduce erosion through the use of riprap. The helical pier design was chosen as the least intrusive design on river flow patterns, and the design most likely to withstand flooding in the spring and ice in the winter. Because of the introduction of piers, some areas of the sloping bank will be impacted, so changes to the current flow will occur. Shoreline above and below the pier structure will be protected with riprap. This site floods annually in the spring, so care has been taken in the past to harden the site and remove any barriers that would cause erosion. The helical pier system will be better able to withstand annual flooding and will cause less blockage to river flows than would a dock. The piers will be placed high enough on the bank to be out of the water during the winter to avoid ice.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity, or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		x				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		x				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		x				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		x				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			x		Y	4e
♦♦f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		x				
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4e. Knapweed and leafy spurge already exist in this river corridor. With ground disturbance from construction, more weeds may appear at this site. This site will continue to be incorporated into the Region One Weed Management Program, with mechanical, biological and chemical methods being used to control weeds.

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♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

☼ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			x		N	5a
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		x				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		x				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		x				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		x				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		x				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest, or other human activity)?		x				
♦♦h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		x				
♦i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		x				
j. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5a. With the change of the shoreline along the section of river where helical piers are installed, some change of small mouth bass habitat will occur. This shoreline is not critical habitat, and the piers should provide additional cover, so no net loss is expected.

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➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		x				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?			x		N	6b
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		x				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6b: During construction some nuisance noise will occur. There is no adjacent housing, but a golf course exists across the river that may have impacts during construction.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		x				
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		x				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		x				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		x				
e. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

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➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			x		Y	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		x				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		x				
♦d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a.)		x				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a: During construction some release of oil or gasoline may occur due to the use of heavy equipment. Silt fences will be in place during construction, and care will be taken to avoid spills. Equipment will not be fueled on site, nor will fuel be stored on site during or after construction.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		x				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		x				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		x				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		x				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		x				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

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➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		x				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		x				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electrical power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		x				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		x				
➢e. Define projected revenue sources.						
➢f. Define projected maintenance costs.						
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

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➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista, or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		x				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		x				
➢c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach tourism report.)			x		N	11c
♦d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		x				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

11c: This project will minimally increase recreational access to Noxon Rapids Reservoir, for both boaters and shore fishermen, and will increase ADA access at this site.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
➢a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure, or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		x				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		x				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		x				
♦♦d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12a.)		x				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

☼ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole,:	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated☼	Comment Index
	Unknown☼	None	Minor☼	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources, which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		x				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		x				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard, or formal plan?		x				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		x				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		x				
♦f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		x				
♦♦g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

☼ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

➢ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no-action alternative) to the proposed action, whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider; and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A: No Action

This alternative would not increase the boating access at Flat Iron Ridge, so people would continue to park across Hwy 200 to access the site. This action would not provide additional ADA-accessible shoreline fishing.

Alternative B: Modified Project

A modified proposal would complete the work at the ramp area and install the ADA fishing platform. It would not install the helical piers or additional parking along the access road.

The area west of the boat launch:

1. The current concrete picnic pad will be maintained and the wood railing replaced.
2. A handicapped-accessible fishing platform that will cantilever out over the river will be constructed.
3. An ADA-accessible concrete access ramp to the picnic table and fishing pier will be constructed, and an ADA-accessible parking area created.
4. The shoreline in this area will be stabilized with riprap or some other appropriate method, and erosion control vegetation will be planted.
5. Additional parking spaces for single vehicles will be developed across the access road from the picnic table.

The boat launch area:

1. Two parking spaces will be extended to allow boat trailer parking, and one new parking space will be added.
2. The riprap shore protection in this area will be extended to the east to protect current facilities.
3. On the spit next to the boat ramp, the existing wood rail will be replaced.

This alternative would gain additional parking and would provide increased shoreline fishing opportunity; however, this alternative would not spread use throughout the site, so congestion at the boat ramp would be increased. People would continue to park across Hwy 200 for access, and the boat ramp would continue to be blocked as people load and unload belongings into their boats. Erosion would continue along the shoreline and along existing facilities.

Alternative C: Complete Project – Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative would maximize the usable space at Flat Iron Ridge, spread use over a wider area, and provide for additional boat and trailer parking. In addition it would provide for future trail links to a trail system to be developed in this area. This project would be phased in over five years, with the area west of the boat launch and the boat launch area being completed, and the helical pier installation occurring later as funding allows.

The area west of the boat launch:

1. The current concrete picnic pad will be maintained and the wood railing replaced.
2. A handicapped-accessible fishing platform that will cantilever out over the river will be constructed.
3. An ADA-accessible concrete access ramp to the picnic table and fishing pier will be constructed, and an ADA-accessible parking area created.
4. The shoreline in this area will be stabilized with riprap or some other appropriate method, and erosion-control vegetation will be planted.
5. Additional parking spaces for single vehicles will be developed across the access road from the picnic table.

The boat launch area:

1. Two parking spaces will be extended to allow boat trailer parking, and one new parking space will be added.
2. The riprap shore protection in this area will be extended to the east to protect current facilities.
3. On the spit next to the boat ramp, the existing wood rail will be replaced.

Between the launch area and the picnic table:

1. Along the shoreline between the boat ramp and the fishing platform, a walkway will be constructed on top of helical piers driven into the bank. The piers would be spaced along the shoreline. To avoid ice damage, the piers will be driven into the bank at a high enough elevation to be out of the water during the winter. Bumpers, running from pier to pier, will be installed along the front of the piers to allow boats to tie up for loading and unloading supplies. The bumpers will also allow debris moving down river during flood situations to hit the bumpers and continue down river rather than hang up on the piers, causing either damage to the piers or erosion to the bank as water moves around the obstruction. The pier design will allow pedestrians access to the walkway along the riverbank between the boat ramp, and the picnic table and fishing platform to the west. This section could eventually become part of the trail system being developed in this area and will be available for fishing from shore.

   Because the technology and construction technique that will be used in this area is relatively new, a small section will be built the first year, and then analyzed at the end of a year to see if the construction will be suitable to the environment in which it

will be placed. After that, if it proves to be suitable, the remaining walkway will be installed over five years as budgeting allows.

2. Parallel parking for boats and trailers will be developed on the right side of the access road to allow for additional vehicle and trailer access. With boats being able to tie along the pier system, these parking areas will be readily accessible for loading and unloading supplies into boats after they have been launched, thus freeing up the launch area.

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

A 310 permit will be acquired from the Green Mountain Conservation District. All best management practices will be following in working in a river environment.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

1a and d: The installation of the riprap on a portion of the shoreline will reduce erosion into the Clark Fork River that is currently occurring at site. Because of the installation of the helical piers, some changes in erosion patterns will occur. This can be mitigated with riprap above and below the pier section, or in other areas along this section of shoreline as needed. While this action will have more impact on the shoreline than a single dock construction would have, it is necessary due to topography and river flows. Ice during winter and spring flooding at this site would damage any dock structure in the water and would cause more erosion as flows washed around the supports for the dock structure. Engineers will be consulted to minimize the impacts of this project on river flow.

2b: During construction some objectionable odors will be released by equipment working on the site. This impact will be temporary and minor.

3a: During construction some turbidity may be introduced into the Clark Fork River. Care will be taken to use proper silt fencing and other barriers to erosion into the water.

3b: With changes in the shoreline, drainage patterns from the parking area will change. Engineering will ensure that proper drainage is available, with water going through French drains or some other system to avoid turbidity in the river.

3c: Current flow pattern in the Clark Fork River at this location sweeps around a curve, hitting the shoreline at Flat Iron Ridge, and proceeding downriver. Because of this flow pattern, erosion is currently ongoing. This project will reduce erosion through the use of riprap. The helical pier design was chosen as the least intrusive design on river flow patterns, and the design most likely to withstand flooding in the spring and ice in the winter. Because of the introduction of piers, some areas of the sloping bank will be impacted, so changes to the current flow will occur. Shoreline above and below the pier structure will be protected with riprap. This site floods annually in the spring, so care has been taken in the past to harden the site and remove any barriers that would cause erosion. The helical pier system will be better able to withstand annual flooding and will cause less blockage to river flows than would a dock. The piers will be placed high enough on the bank to be out of the water during the winter to avoid ice.

4e: Knapweed and leafy spurge already exist in this river corridor. With ground disturbance from construction, more weeds may appear at this site. This site will continue to be incorporated into the Region One Weed Management Program, with mechanical, biological, and chemical methods being used to control weeds.

5a. With the change of the shoreline along the section of river where helical piers are installed, some change of small mouth bass habitat will occur. This shoreline is not critical habitat, and the piers should provide additional cover, so no net loss is expected.

6b: During construction, some nuisance noise will occur. There is no adjacent housing, but a golf course exists across the river that may have impacts during construction.

8a: During construction, some release of oil or gasoline may occur due to the use of heavy equipment. Silt fences will be in place during construction, and care will be taken to avoid spills. Equipment will not be fueled on site, nor will fuel be stored on site during or after construction.

11c: This project will minimally increase recreational access to Noxon Rapids Reservoir, for both boaters and shore fishermen, and will increase ADA access at this site.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EIS is not required as the impacts are minor. An environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis for this action.

2. Describe the level of public involvement for this project, if any; and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances:

This project is part of mitigation agreed upon in the relicensing of the Noxon and Cabinet Gorge Dams. Through this process, extensive public comment, and professional analysis received identified this site as a site needing additional parking and improved access for bank fishing. Thirty-day internal and external public comment periods will be held, with advertisements in the Sanders County Ledger legal section and on the FWP web site. A public meeting will be held if sufficient interest is displayed to merit such a meeting. A 30-day appeal period will be allowed after the issuance of a decision document in case the decision is appealed.

3. **Duration of comment period, if any:**

A 30-day internal review was held, and a 30-day public review will be held from November 3 through December 3, 2003. If interest warrants, a public meeting will be held in Thompson Falls.

5. Name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

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